

Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

January 2015

Dutton Elementary School

Title I

Book Picks

Read-aloud favorites

■ *Blue-Ribbon Dad*

(Beth Rainsner Glass)

A little squirrel loves his dad so much that he makes him an award. After all, his dad packs his favorite lunch, taught him to tie his shoes, and reads with him. The son can hardly wait for his dad to get home from work and receive his ribbon.



■ *Exclamation Mark!*

(Amy Krouse Rosenthal)

An exclamation point feels self-conscious because he stands out everywhere he appears. Eventually, he discovers his (important!) purpose. Your child will enjoy this fun grammar



lesson that's also about celebrating differences.

■ *The Girl Who Never Made Mistakes*

(Mark Pett and Gary Rubinstein)

No one's perfect, right? In this story, nine-year-old Beatrice Bottomwell is always super careful to get the right answers and to never lose at anything. What will happen when she makes her first mistake? A story about overcoming perfectionism.

■ *Marisol McDonald and the Clash Bash/Marisol McDonald y la fiesta sin igual*

From pirates to princesses, Marisol manages to combine all of her interests for an awesome, mismatched party in this bilingual picture book. And thanks to a computer, she gets a surprise "visit" from her grandmother in Peru.



Comprehension checkup

Good readers know when things make sense, and they know when they're confused. To boost your child's reading comprehension, encourage him to ask himself questions like these as he reads or listens to stories.

"Did I read that right?"

Get your youngster thinking about whether the words he reads make sense. Read aloud, and tell him you're going to change a word to make it funny. *Example:* "Clouds gathered, and *reindeer* fell from the sky" (instead of *rain*). Ask, "Did that make sense?" After he shakes his head "no," he can suggest a better word. Then, show him the actual word.

"Do I understand what I just read?"

Your child may know every word and still not comprehend the story. As he reads (or listens), stop occasionally so he can describe the action. If he's reading a picture book, he might pause after every few pages to say what's happening. For a



chapter book, he could summarize after each chapter.

"How can I figure this out?"

What can your youngster do when he's stuck on a word? Suggest the clapping strategy: Read the sentence out loud, but clap instead of saying the hard word. By the end of the sentence, the word might pop into his head. Or if he's confused about the plot, rereading the last few paragraphs or pages can help—if it doesn't, he might ask you or his teacher for clues. ♥

Create a family mural

Use this family mural project to increase the number of words your youngster can write—and read.

First, cut paper grocery bags into flat panels, and hang them side by side on a hallway wall (blank sides out). Next, agree on a theme. Will your mural be a colorful rain forest or maybe an amusement park?

Your child could use crayons to draw a roller coaster, while you color a Ferris wheel. Encourage her to add words or sentences ("Cotton candy" for a new writer or "Get your cotton candy right here!" for a more experienced one).

Tip: Leave the mural up so your youngster can practice reading as she passes it. ♥



Reading and writing field trips

When you and your youngster go on outings, take reading and writing along! She'll make connections between books and real life, and she'll find interesting topics to write about. Try these steps:

1. Visit a setting. After reading a story set in the mountains, hike a mountain trail at a national or state park. If your child reads a book on the history of railroads, go to a railroad museum or a train station. Or read a story about cupcakes, and ask a local bakery for a behind-the-scenes tour.



2. Talk about it. How is the real-life setting similar to or different from the place in the book? On your hike, your youngster might see tree-covered peaks while the book had snowcapped mountaintops.

3. Write about it. Have your child carry a notebook.

Take a break, and help her write about what she sees. She can jot down facts from signs ("There are 30,000 miles of railroad track in our state") or write her impressions ("The frosting comes in pretty colors").♥

Fun with Words

A sweet spelling challenge

A bag full of sugar can help your child's spelling skills. How? Do this activity to find out.

Materials: small freezer bags, sugar, magnetic letters

Secretly think of a short word (*pet, mug*). Fill a bag halfway with sugar, add the magnetic letters that spell the word, and shake.



Then, let your youngster squish the bag gently to move the letters around and unscramble the word. Feeling their shapes can make the word "stick" in his brain so he'll remember it later. Can he create more than one word from the same letters? (*Example: mug, gum.*) Have him say each word he spells.

Remove the letters, and ask your child to create a spelling bag for you. Picking out the letters that make up a word is another great way for him to practice spelling.♥

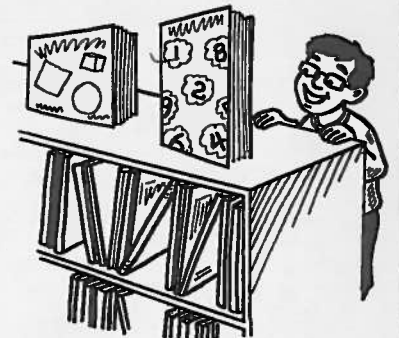
Q&A

Math stories

Q My son loves reading, but he isn't as excited about math. How can I use reading to help him enjoy math more?

A You could start with a trip to the library. Authors like Stuart Murphy, Marilyn Burns, and Loreen Leedy have written many fun picture books on numbers, measurement, graphs, money, and other math topics. Read the books aloud, and try math activities from the story. Your child might count cereal pieces, measure household items, or graph family members' favorite colors, for instance.

Also, encourage him to read other materials that include both words and numbers, such as recipes, coupons, and sports articles. Use them to make up word problems together. *Example:* "Our team scored 3 goals, and the other team scored 2. How many goals were scored in the game?" (*Answer:* 5.) Or when your son brings story problems home from school, let him read them to you and then retell them in his own words before solving them.♥



Parent to Parent

Wiggle while you read

Our daughter Leyna is a wiggler.

She's happiest and concentrates best when her body is moving. Sitting still at a desk or table is hard for her, so my wife and I made a few changes to her homework space at home.

Instead of a chair, we gave her a big rubber ball to sit on, which lets her rock, bounce, jiggle, and roll while she reads.

If she gets tired of sitting or just wants to stand, she uses the secondhand drafting table we found at a garage sale. The table adjusts in height and also tilts, so we can set it to just the right angle for reading.

Leyna is happy with the new furniture because it helps her concentrate—while working the wiggles out!♥



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Read-aloud favorites

■ *Groundhog Gets a Say*

(Pamela Curtis Swallow)

Groundhog is tired of being famous just for predicting the weather, so he tells a reporter other interesting things about himself. For example, groundhogs whistle when they're in danger, create a "bathroom" in their burrows, and have teeth strong enough to gnaw through rocks.

■ *Once Upon an Alphabet: Short Stories for All the Letters*

(Oliver Jeffers)

Read a quirky story about each letter of the alphabet. J is about a door made of jelly, R features robots who steal rain clouds, and S has a cucumber that wants to be a sea cucumber. Enjoy your child's laughter as he learns about the sounds that letters make.



■ *A Tree Is Nice* (Janice May Udry)

What can you do with a tree? This book is full of fun—and practical—purposes for trees. Your youngster might nap in its shade or jump into piles of its leaves, for example. The story encourages readers to appreciate and care for trees. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Locomotive* (Brian Floca)

Fact and fiction blend together as a family travels across America on the brand-new transcontinental railroad. Readers will find out how the railroad was built, how steam power works, and what the landscape looked like.



Build a rich vocabulary

It's simple: The more words your child knows, the more words she will understand and use when she reads, writes, and talks. Here are ways to weave new vocabulary into conversations at home.

Word choices

"Put on your pajamas."
"Please close the door." If you're like most families, much of what you say to your youngster revolves around the details of daily life. When possible, try using bigger or more interesting words. Talk about *evaporation* while waiting for water to boil. While you're doing her hair, have a conversation about *inherited traits* like having curly hair.

Playtime talk

Imaginary situations give your child the chance to use words that might not come up in regular discussions. Join her as she plays veterinarian or airport, and say, "Could you please *examine* my pet



rhinoceros?" or "I'd like to travel to a warm *destination*."

Grown-up conversations

Include your youngster in some adult conversations. She'll feel grown up, and she'll enjoy hearing and trying out new words. When guests visit, ask questions that invite her to join the discussion. *Examples:* "I loved the movie. What was your *opinion* of it?" "Would you like a *pastry*? We have muffins and scones." ♥

Biographies 1-2-3

Your child can learn all kinds of facts from biographies—and enjoy these three benefits.

1. Exploring nonfiction. Kids are now reading more nonfiction in school, and picture biographies are a good way to read nonfiction at home. Your youngster could choose books about people who interest him, such as artists or scientists.

2. Discovering history. Encourage your child to read biographies of historical figures he studies in school. He'll dig deeper into the past as he uncovers information about their hobbies, families, and jobs.

3. Learning about good character. Biographies often describe how people overcame challenges or made a difference in the world. As your youngster reads, ask him to tell you about the person's good character traits. ♥



A storybook museum

Let your youngster display his favorite books in his very own museum. He will pay attention to characters and settings—and practice retelling stories—as he sets up and shares his exhibits.

● **Find characters.** Ask your child to think about the people and animals in the story. Then, he can gather action figures and toy dinosaurs, aliens, or other creatures to represent them.

● **Design a setting.** Next, he could decorate a tabletop or bookcase shelf to show the setting. For a story set in outer



space, he might line a shelf with black construction paper and line up different-sized balls as planets.

● **Add a plaque.** Help your youngster make a sign describing his exhibit. He can include the title and author along with a few important details from the book. *Tip:* Make sure he displays the book, too.

● **Give a “tour.”** Finally, ask him to take you on a tour of his museum. He’ll practice retelling as he describes the story and his exhibit.

Idea: He could rotate his displays by choosing a new book each week.♥



Fun with Words All in the family

What do *band*, *land*, and *sand* have in common? They’re all members of the *-and* family. And if your child can write one word in a family, it’ll be easier for her to write the rest of them.



First, help her think of a word that has a lot of rhymes, such as *shake*. She could go through the alphabet and

try putting each letter in place of *sh* (*bake*, *cake*, *fake*, *lake*, *make*). Let her write down the words she comes up with.

Together, use the words to write a silly rhyming story. *Example:* “I’m going to bake a cake. Let’s eat the cake I make. I promise it’s not fake! We’ll have it with a vanilla shake.”

Take turns thinking of more word families, and make up more stories.♥

Q&A Fit in more reading

Q Our evenings are so busy. How can we find more time to read with our daughter?

A Try reading a “wake-up” story. Start your morning with a read-aloud, and your child will look forward to waking up and enjoying a story with you. You could even listen to an audio book together while you eat breakfast.

Also, travel with books. Stash some in a tote bag in the car, and encourage your daughter to keep a few in her backpack. That way, she will always have something with her to read.

Finally, think short and sweet. When there isn’t time for an entire book, stop to read a handful of poems, a few pages of a world record book, an article from a children’s magazine, or some knock-knock jokes.♥



Help wanted!

It’s chore time—and it’s also time to read and write! Try these suggestions, and you may find your youngster more motivated to do chores.

Create ads

“Advertise” for special jobs your child can do. You might write, “Hardworking child needed to straighten up the linen closet” or “Super cleaner wanted to help organize the garage.” Post the ad on the refrigerator, and help your youngster read it.

Make a checklist

Together, talk about everyday ways your youngster could pitch in around the house. Agree on a few, and have him list them on a piece of paper. He will keep track of chores and practice writing words like *table*, *clean*, and *kitchen*. Let him draw a box beside each chore to check off when he finishes.♥



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Book Picks



Read-aloud favorites

■ *Sonia Sotomayor: A Judge Grows in the Bronx* (Jonah Winter)

This picture-book biography describes the life of the first Latin American woman on the U.S.



Supreme Court. As a little girl, Sonia Sotomayor faced poverty and illness, but she worked hard in school and had a loving, supportive family. Written in both English and Spanish on each page.

■ *Hide and Sheep* (Andrea Beaty)

In this silly counting book, a farmer is trying to round up his uncooperative sheep. They've escaped into town and are doing goofy things like posing in an art museum or going to the beach. How will the farmer ever find all of his sneaky sheep?



■ *Subway Story* (Julia Sarcone-Roach)

Jessie, a cheerful blue subway car, is proud of her job carrying people to work and school. When she "retires," she gets another cool job—she is sunk into the ocean to become an artificial reef for sea creatures. Includes an author's note with information about how old subway cars are recycled into reefs.

■ *The Farmer and the Clown* (Marla Frazee)

In this wordless picture book, a baby clown falls off a circus train and is rescued by a farmer. Using the beautiful pictures and his own imagination, your child can tell the story that he sees as he turns the pages.



Be a critical reader

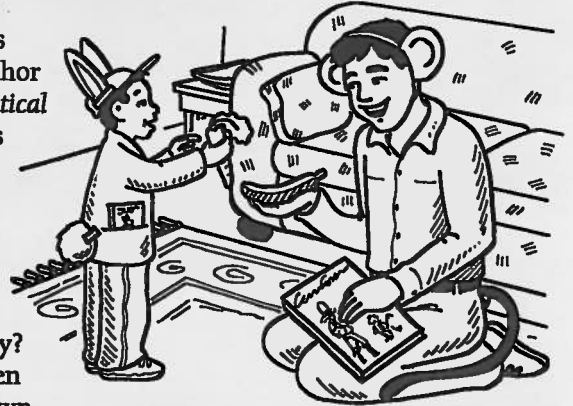
"I wonder what that character is thinking." "Hmm, how did the author pick the setting for this story?" *Critical readers think about things like this when they read. These activities can help your youngster practice reading critically at home.*

Hold imaginary conversations

If Peter Rabbit could chat with Curious George, what would he say? What would a conversation between Miss Frizzle and Encyclopedia Brown sound like? Read two books with your child. Then, each of you should pick a character to be, and carry on a conversation. *Idea:* Suggest that your youngster use what he knows about the characters (Peter and George tend to get into trouble) to predict what they'll discuss (ways to stay out of trouble).

Switch the setting

Encourage your youngster to think about how a book's plot and setting are related. Read a story to him, and have him draw a picture of a new setting for it. Maybe he'll draw Encyclopedia Brown solving a mystery in a desert or on a cruise ship instead of in the town of



Idaville. *Idea:* Ask him to retell the story to you using the new location. He will see how changing the setting affects the story.

Know the author

Let your child get several books by the same author. As you read them together, talk about what they have in common. ("The main character in all of her books is an animal.") What can your youngster guess about the author based on her books? For example, she probably likes animals, and maybe she has pets or has lived on a farm. *Idea:* Look up an author online or read the "About the Author" section in a book to learn about her life.♥

Our family dictionary

From A to Z, this homemade dictionary celebrates family members' personalities and favorite things—and lets your child work on writing definitions.

Help her think of a word for each letter of the alphabet that has something to do with your family (*active, spaghetti, zoo*). Together, come up with a unique definition for each word. Then, help her write it on an index card (or write it for her), and let her illustrate it. *Example:* "Spaghetti: Our family's favorite food."

She might do a few each day. When her dictionary is complete, she should check that the cards are in ABC order. Then, hole-punch the top left corner of each one, and connect them with a binder ring or yarn.♥

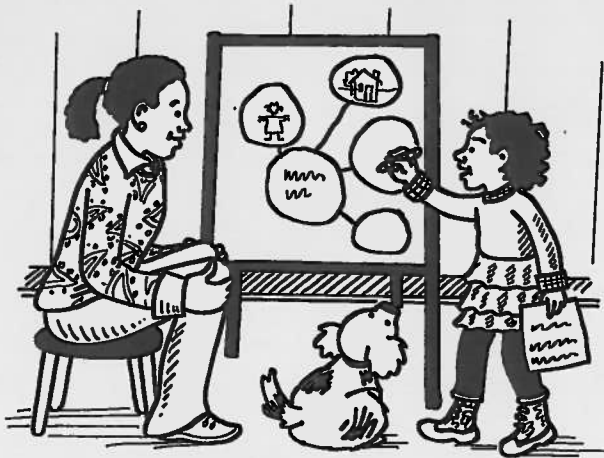


Planning to write

Getting ready to write can be as important as writing! Encourage your youngster to think first with these ideas.

Talk. Talking through her ideas will help your child organize her thoughts. Listen as she explains, and ask questions to guide her. For example, "What will happen next?" *Tip:* Offer advice when she wants it, but avoid criticizing her ideas or telling her what to write.

Draw. Suggest that she draw and color a picture of her ideas with as many details as



possible. Visualizing what will happen can make writing easier. And working out the details first may lead to more descriptive characters, settings, and plots.

Diagram. Have your youngster create a graphic organizer. She could make a story map, with her title in a bubble in the middle of

her paper. Then, she can draw lines to smaller bubbles all around the large one and sketch or write a plot event in each one. Or she might divide a sheet of paper into four boxes labeled "Characters," "Setting," "Problem," and "Solution" and fill them in.♥

Fun with Words



Letters good enough to eat

Your child can eat his way to letter recognition with this tasty treat.

Together, mix up dough for your favorite biscuit, bread, or cookie recipe. Let your youngster roll small pieces of

the dough into long, thin, snake-like pieces. Show him how to form the pieces into the shapes of letters. He proba-

bly will want to start with the letters in his name. Then, bake the



dough according to the recipe.

When the letters cool, he could move them around to form words—and then eat his words! Can your child tell you the names of the letters he made? What about their sounds?♥

Read the directions

Whether your youngster is taking a test or putting together a toy, reading the instructions can help her do a better job. Share these tips.



1. Read carefully. Encourage her to read the instructions all the way to the end. She'll get an overview of what she has to do.

2. Take it step by step. Your child could circle key words like *subtract*, *underline*, or *discard*. She should reread any part that confused her—or ask for help if she needs it.

3. Refer back. If your youngster is doing a school assignment, suggest that she glance back at the instructions as she works. If she's putting up a play tent, she might reread each step before she does it and check it off when it's finished.♥

Q&A Choosing books I can read

Q How can I tell if the books my son picks at the library are at the right reading level for him?

A "Just right" books—ones that aren't too easy or too hard—help your son stretch his reading ability. These are books in which he can easily read about 95 percent of the words, leaving him with just a few to figure out.

Don't worry, there's no need to get out your calculator. Simply listen to him read, and if he seems comfortable and

struggles only occasionally, the book is probably at what teachers call his "instructional level." This is the level that teaches him new words without making him frustrated or confused. After he reads a just-right book a few times, it may even become an easy one!

It's good for your son to pick out easy and hard books, too. Easy books are relaxing and enjoyable. And reading hard ones aloud to him will expose him to bigger words and more complex plots.♥



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■ *Up, Down, and Around*

(Katherine Ayres)

Corn grows up toward the sky, but beets grow down into the ground. This nonfiction book introduces your child to plants and prepositions at the same time, as she sees the different directions that vegetables grow. (Also available in Spanish.)



■ *Ellison the Elephant*

(Eric Drachman)

Ellison can't produce a trumpet sound like his sister or his friends do. His mother tries to reassure him that being different makes him special. But the other elephants tease him for the quiet toot that comes out of his trunk. Includes a CD that lets children hear the "jazzy" sound that Ellison learns to make.



■ *The Lost Lunch* (Lori Mortensen)

This graphic novel for early readers begins by showing kids how to read a comic strip-style book. Then, find out what happens when Ethan can't find his lunch and his friend Dylan helps him look for it. Part of the My First Graphic Novel series.

■ *A Book for Black-Eyed Susan*

(Judy Young)

Ten-year-old Cora is heading west in a wagon train with her family. Along the way, she discovers that being with her brand-new baby sister can help her cope with the terrible tragedy she suffers. A story about the difficulties and joys of pioneer days.



Let's go for a reading walk

It's springtime—the perfect time to go for a walk. Why not make it a reading walk? Here are fun ways your child can read words in her environment while you enjoy the outdoors together.

Match the card

Before heading out, help your youngster write words on index cards to match ones she might see. For a walk downtown, she could write *main* and *sale* or draw street signs and store logos. If you're going to the park, her cards may include words like *trail* and *playground*. As you walk, have her search for each word, read it aloud, and hand the card to you. Can she match all of her cards?

Fit a category

Ask your child to think of a category and look around for words that fit. She might want to find words about colors, math, or sports. If she picks math words, for instance, she may read *one way*, *town square*, and *half price*. On your next walk,



she can choose a different category. She could keep track of how many words she reads for each one and declare her most popular category!

Spot little words

Encourage your youngster to look for little words within big ones—a strategy that can help her read longer words. Look for a long word like *department* or *transportation*. Together, see how many small words you can find in it, such as *part*, *art*, *men*, and *depart* in *department*. ♥

"And the teddy bear said..."

Teddy bear...lizard...bald eagle...any stuffed animal can star in this family storytelling activity. You'll boost your youngster's language skills as you make up a story together.

1. Develop your character. Let your child select a stuffed animal (say, a chameleon), and take a few minutes to "get to know" it. You could each name character traits or describe its appearance. *Examples:* Colorful, changeable, quick.

2. Tell a story. Your youngster can start the tale. ("Once upon a time, there was a chameleon that slithered quickly across the rocks.") Then, he tosses the stuffed animal to the next person, who continues the plot. Keep "tossing and telling" until someone wraps up the story. ♥



My writer's notebook

A writer's notebook can inspire your youngster to write every day. Give him a notebook, and let him decorate the cover. Then, share these ideas.

Onomatopoeia. It's fun to say and write words that sound like their meanings. Your child might list ones such as *boom*, *hiss*, and *crunch*.



Heart map. This big heart is filled with all the things your youngster loves. Let him draw a heart that fills a page. Inside it, he can illustrate and label his favorite things (*family*, *mountains*, *music*).

Jokes. Help your child write down jokes he hears or thinks up. He

could draw a funny picture to go with each one.

Questions. Does your youngster wonder why apple slices turn brown or why puddles disappear? When he asks a question, have him jot it down. Help him look it up in a book or online so he can add the answer.♥

Fun with Words

The case of the missing conjunctions

Or, *and*, or *but*? One of these words is missing from each sentence in this game. Let your little detective crack the case—and learn about conjunctions (words that link other words or clauses).

Cut out three sentences from a magazine that include *or*, *and*, or *but*. Snip out the conjunctions, and lay the remaining sentence pieces on a table. Now, write those conjunctions on separate slips of paper, and hide them around the room. Your child can use a magnifying glass (or her super x-ray vision) to find the missing words.



Then, help her decide which conjunction goes where. Explain that *and* means both (“She eats apples *and* oranges”), *or* means one or the other (“Should we walk *or* bike?”), and *but* explains a difference (“I want a pet hamster, *but* Mom said no”). Once all the conjunctions are in place, help her read the complete sentences. Case solved!♥

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Q&A Create a home library

Q I'm looking for inexpensive ways to help our daughter build a book collection. What do you suggest?

A Warmer weather means more yard sales and garage sales—and more chances to add used books to your daughter's shelves. Shop together so she can pick out books she'll want to read.

Any time of year, you'll find bargains at used bookstores, thrift shops, library book sales, and online bookstores. You could also ask relatives and neighbors to pass down books their children have outgrown. Your daughter may find it special to own books that her cousins or the “big kids” in the neighborhood used to read.

It's nice to get a few new books, too. For inexpensive ones, attend the school book fair and watch for the book-club catalogs that your daughter brings home.♥



Parent to Parent Celebrate poetry

My son's class is celebrating National Poetry Month this April, and his teacher sent home great ideas for poetry activities to do as a family.

Liam was excited to pick a few. First, he wanted to plan a poetry picnic. We checked out children's poetry books from the library, packed sandwiches and fruit, and went into our backyard. As we ate, we took turns reading poems aloud.



We also loved the teacher's “poem-in-your-pocket” idea. We each wrote down a poem, folded it up, and put it in our pocket to share with classmates or coworkers.

Liam enjoyed sharing Shel Silverstein's “Ice Cream Stop” with the server at our local ice cream shop—and I liked that he's discovering how much fun it is to read poetry.♥

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Read-aloud favorites



■ *Tim and the Iceberg* (Paul Coates)

A little boy and his grandfather use their imaginations to stay cool on a hot day at the beach. Grandpa tells Tim stories, and then Tim sets off on a pretend trip to the North Pole to bring back an iceberg.



■ *Just One Bite* (Lola Schaefer)

Your youngster will learn about the eating habits of 11 animals in this nonfiction book. There's the whale that gulps down an entire giant squid and the butterfly that swallows just three drops of nectar. Each animal and its food are drawn to scale so your child can see exactly how much it eats in one bite.



■ *Moses Goes to a Concert* (Isaac Millman)

Moses and his classmates are excited to go on a field trip to a concert. The students, who are all deaf, are surprised to find out the orchestra's percussionist is deaf, too. Includes conversations in sign language and a page showing the hand alphabet.

■ *A Different Princess: Knight Princess* (Amy Potter)

Amy thinks she's not your average princess. In fact, she tells her pet unicorn she's a brave knight princess—"cooler than Cinderella." Amy's mission is to rescue a little prince from a dragon, but she ends up rescuing the dragon instead. Part of the series *A Different Princess*. (Also available in Spanish.)



Summertime is story time

Make summer reading a family affair with regular read-alouds. Here are simple suggestions to help your child get the most out of the books you read together.

Your turn, my turn

Take turns picking books so your youngster gets a say. When it's your turn to choose, mix up fiction and nonfiction, including graphic novels, biographies, poetry, how-to books, historical fiction, and mysteries. You'll introduce him to many kinds of books that he'll read in school—and he may find a new favorite genre.

A two-way street

Inspire your child to really get involved in story time. For instance, let him set the pace. He may want to stop and point out a cute animal in an illustration or have you reread a funny part. Or maybe he'd like to read the main character's dialogue.

Q&As

Read-alouds give your youngster a chance to hear harder books than he can



read on his own. Encourage him to ask you if he doesn't know what a word means or can't understand what's happening. Ask him questions, too. ("Do you know what an ocelot is?" "What did you think of the ending?")

Guest readers

If you visit relatives, or they visit you, invite them to read to your child. It's good for him to hear different reading voices and styles. Maybe you can even go to a nearby library together, and they could show your youngster books they enjoyed when they were little. ♥

Fine-motor games

Let your youngster work on fine-motor skills this summer for better handwriting in the fall. Play these games together:

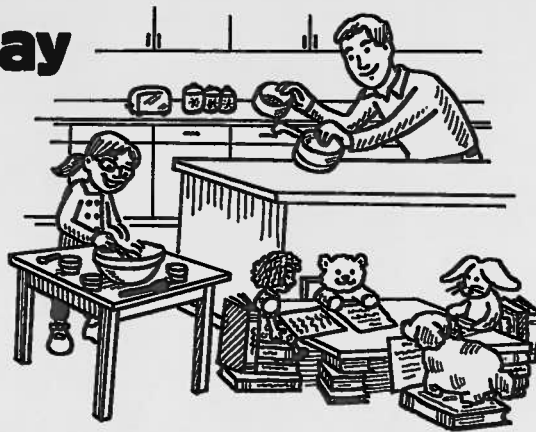
- This homemade version of Jenga can improve your child's hand-eye coordination. Cut four sponges into four strips each. Take turns stacking the pieces to build a tower. Keep going until one player's piece knocks over the tower—then start again.
- Strengthen your youngster's pencil grip with this idea. Give each player a clean, empty squirt bottle (for example, a mustard or ketchup bottle) and a cotton ball. Pick a starting line and a finish line. Squeeze your containers to blow air on your cotton balls, "racing" to move the balls from start to finish. ♥



Write while you play

Is there a doctor in the house? What about a chef or a banker? With these clever ideas, you can build in fun writing practice when your youngster plays.

Doctor. Suggest that your child make an eye chart by writing a giant “E” at the top of a piece of paper and rows of random letters underneath that gradually get smaller. A pad of sticky notes is ideal for writing “prescriptions,” and she can jot notes about patients on “forms” attached to a clipboard.



Chef. Ask your youngster to write menus showing what she’ll feed her dolls or stuffed animals! She might list spaghetti and meatballs for her doll or garden salad for a stuffed bunny. You could give her cookbooks or carryout menus to look for ideas. *Tip:* Have her write shopping lists for the ingredients she would need.

Banker. Help your child gather old checkbooks, ink pads and stamps, pretend money (bills and coins), and envelopes. Take turns being the teller and customer. She’ll get practice writing numbers and words as she fills out checks and deposit slips.♥

Fun with Words

My word garden

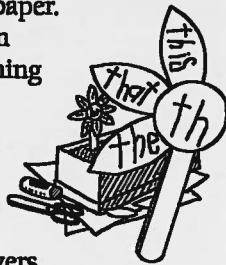
Watch your child’s reading and writing skills bloom with this springtime activity.

Have your youngster cut small circles from construction paper.

On each one, he can write a word beginning (br, th, pre) or ending (ed, ing, tion).

Then, he should glue the circles to craft sticks

to start making flowers.



Next, ask him to cut out flower petals. As he reads books, he can be on the lookout for words with the beginnings (bridge, then) and endings (plopped, sailing) he chose. When he finds a word, help him write it on a petal and glue it on the correct flower.

Once a flower has petals all the way around, it’s time to “plant” it! Your child might put soil in a shoebox and plant flowers there. Or he could stick them in your yard or garden. Each time he plants a flower, encourage him to practice reading all of his words.♥

Q&A

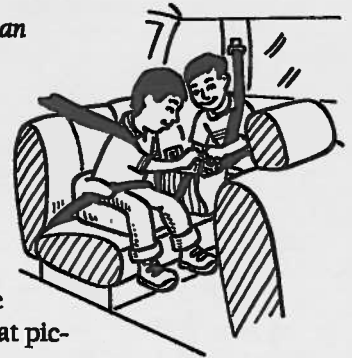
“Goody bags” for reading

Q We’re taking several car trips this summer. How can we encourage our children to read on the road rather than watch videos?

A Instead of taking electronics with you, try packing a reading goody bag for your youngsters. Books are a must-have! Include titles that are fun to read to each other, such as choose-your-own adventure stories. Add colorful bookmarks, too.

You could also put in travel brochures about the places you’re going. For instance, they might look at pictures and read about a children’s museum or a pick-your-own farm near their grandparents’ house. Include maps, and ask your kids to help you navigate. As you pass a sign for a town or a landmark, they could try to spot it on the map.

Finally, toss in decks of trivia cards. You don’t need to play a formal game—just use them to ask each other questions. It will help pass the time, and your children will practice reading while learning new facts.♥



Parent to Parent

Show-and-tell

When my daughter Jayla was in preschool, I cleared a shelf on her bookcase to use as a “treasure shelf.” Each week, she’d put interesting items on it, such as souvenirs, school projects, photographs—and even a four-leaf clover she found.

The treasure shelf became a great conversation starter for her. At dinner, Jayla would often present show-and-tell about her treasures. Sometimes she’d even

write about an item and read the story to us. What a wonderful way to know what she was thinking and learning!

As a surprise, I occasionally added objects to the shelf. I chose books she’d like from the library, a newspaper article I cut out, and unusual stones I found outside.

Jayla will be seven soon, and she still loves her shelf. What’s more, her little brother Mark has been listening and watching—and now he’s ready to start his own treasure shelf.♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children’s reading, writing, and language skills.

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One Hundred Words

Reading goes more smoothly for your child when she recognizes 100 of the most common words on sight. But it takes practice to master those words. Find the words on the flip side of this guide, and use the ideas below to make learning them fun and easy!



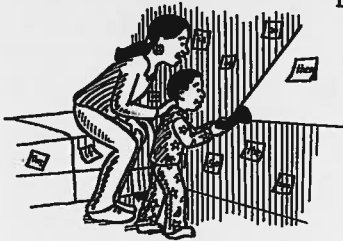
Shake, rattle, read

Print 5–10 sight words on separate small pieces of cardboard or craft foam. Let your youngster drop them in a clear, empty plastic jar. Then, she can fill the jar about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way with uncooked rice, screw on the lid, and shake to mix up the rice and words.

Start a stopwatch or timer. Your child's job is to shake the jar until she sees each word and reads it aloud. Record the time, and have her try again. Each time she reads the words, she'll get a little more comfortable. Once she knows those words, play again with another set.

Shine on!

Together, write sight words on sticky notes. Put them all over your youngster's bedroom walls and furniture. Get a flashlight, and turn out the lights. Say one of the words.



Ask your child to "spot" it with the flashlight and read the word aloud. Next, he gives you a word to find. **Tip:** If he picks the wrong word, you might say, "That word is *the*. I am looking for

them." Then, help him find the right word.

Each night, you could name five words for each other to locate. And all day long, the sight words will be on your youngster's wall to see and practice!

Roll the dice

When you play board games with dice, add reading practice. Take an extra die, cover the sides with small pieces of masking tape, and write a different sight word on each one.

Then, start playing the game. To move her token, a player rolls both the word die and the regular number dice. After she reads the word shown, she moves the number rolled. Help your child read the word if she gets stuck.

Go fishing

Write 10 sight words on a sheet of paper. Have your youngster write each letter of every word on a separate index

card. Shuffle the cards. Deal two cards faceup to each player. Spread the rest facedown in a "pond" between you.

The object is to collect letters to make as many words from the list as you can. On your turn, you may either "fish" from the pond (draw a card) or ask an opponent to trade a card. When the pond is empty, the person who made the most words is the winner.

Words on a stick

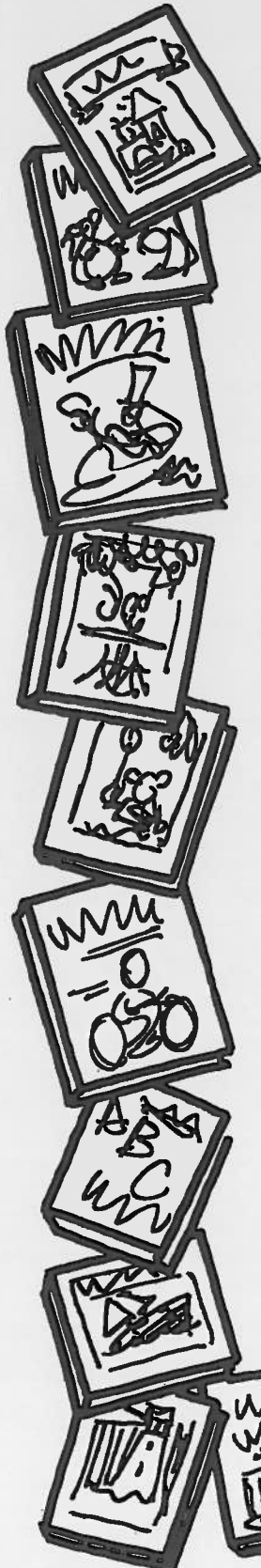
For more word fun, print the 100 sight words on individual craft sticks, and try these activities:

- Have your youngster think of groups to sort the words into (all words that start with *T* or words with an *A* in them, for example). He can read the words aloud and tell you why they belong together.
- Gather old magazines or newspapers. Place the sticks in a bag, and pick five each. Then, find and circle each of your words in a headline or an article—the first one finished wins. Put the sticks back, and play another round.
- Suggest that your child draw three sticks and read the words. Ask her to spell each one with Scrabble tiles or with magnetic letters on the refrigerator.
- Before running errands, tell each person to grab a word stick. See who can locate and read his word the most times while you're out.



continued

Sight words

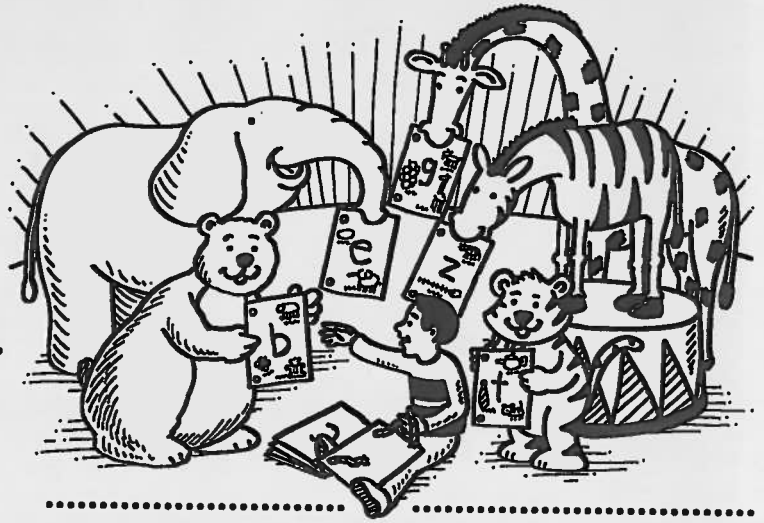


the	or	will	number
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on	can	make	its
are	said	like	now
as	there	him	find
with	use	into	long
his	an	time	down
they	each	has	day
I	which	look	did
at	she	two	get
be	do	more	come
this	how	write	made
have	their	go	may
from	if	see	part



LET'S WRITE A BOOK

It's fun to be an author! Writing books is a great way to bring together all kinds of things your youngster is learning about in school, whether it's letters of the alphabet, shapes, or science experiments. Here are eight ideas for books he could make, along with tips for illustrating and binding his work.

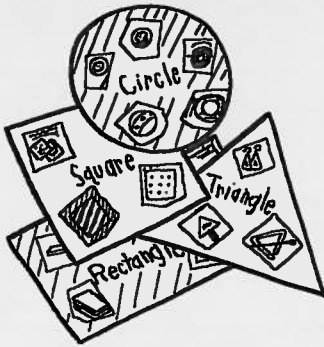


ABC BOOK

From armadillo to zebra or avocado to zucchini, this 26-page book lets your child practice beginning sounds. To start, he should print every letter of the alphabet on a separate sheet of paper. Then, he can draw pictures of things that begin with each letter. Help him label the drawings (*alarm clock, bagel, camel*).
Tip: Suggest that your youngster choose a theme for his ABC book, such as animals, foods, or favorite activities.

SHAPES ALL AROUND

Here's a fun project for learning about shapes. Have your youngster cut large shapes out of construction paper and label them (*Circle, Square, Triangle, Rectangle*). Next, help her cut out magazine pictures to match and glue them on the correct shapes. For example, she might put photos of a rug and a box of crackers on the rectangle page. Ask her to "read" her book by naming the shapes and counting the sides and corners of each object. ("The rug is a rectangle. It has 4 sides and 4 corners." "The window is a circle. It has no sides or corners!")



WHAT'S MAGNETIC?

Let your little scientist explore magnets (or another scientific topic) and write about his results. First, he could carry a magnet around the house to see what it sticks to. Help him take notes as he experiments. Then, he can write a two-part book. In the first section, tell him to draw and label objects that are magnetic (*refrigerator, toaster*), and in the second part, items that aren't (*coffee table, curtain*). Suggest that he trace and label his magnet, too.

MY FAIRY TALE

Encourage your child to explore characters, settings, and plots by writing her own version of a fairy tale. She could replace each character with someone she knows. How about her cousin Bella as Goldilocks? Or her little brother starring in *Jack and the Beanstalk*? She might also try different settings. For instance, maybe Goldilocks will sample porridge in a city apartment rather than in a cottage in the woods. While your youngster writes (or dictates) her tale, she can decide how her changes affect the plot.

ILLUSTRATION IDEAS

As your child looks through picture books, she'll see that illustrators use various materials and techniques. She'll enjoy trying ones like these for her own books.

- **PAINT.** Have her experiment with watercolors, poster paint, and glitter paint. What effect does each one create?
- **CHALK.** Your youngster could write her story on white paper and tape it to larger pieces of dark paper. Then, suggest that she draw with pastel-colored chalk on the dark sheets.
- **CUTOUTS.** Suggest that your child cut shapes (a tree trunk, branches, leaves) from colored paper and glue them into one picture.
- **PHOTOS.** Real-life scenes make a fun addition to any book—especially nonfiction. Let your youngster use your cell phone or a camera to snap pictures for her book.



continued



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

What is your youngster an “expert” on? Perhaps she loves T-ball or she’s crazy about geckos. Ask her to share her knowledge by creating a nonfiction book—she’ll practice writing what her teacher calls “informational pieces.” On each page, she could write a fact about her topic. *Examples:* “You can’t steal bases in T-ball” or “Geckos can walk on ceilings!” Have her illustrate each page and read her book to your family.

SNACK RECIPES

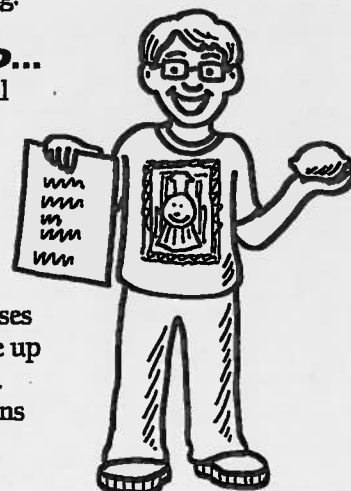
With this yummy idea, your youngster will add his own cookbook to your family bookshelf and work on writing step-by-step instructions. Make a snack together, and after each step, he can write (or dictate) what he did. For instance, if you’re making English muffin pizzas, his first step might be, “Split an English muffin in half.” Suggest that he illustrate the steps, too. Then, he could add another recipe during snack time tomorrow.

A COLLECTION OF MEMORIES

Let your child glue mementos she has collected into a photo album. She might include a program from her class play, a swim meet ribbon, or ticket stubs from a movie. She can take a walk down memory lane as you help her write a caption for each one. Adding lots of details will give her practice in descriptive writing.

ROSES ARE RED...

Your youngster will explore rhymes by making this book as a gift for a friend or relative. On each page, help him write one line of a rhyming verse. He could start with the traditional “Roses are red,” or maybe he’ll come up with his own colorful rhyme. (“Lemons are yellow / Dragons are green / You’re the coolest person / I’ve ever seen.”)



“PUBLISHING” TIPS

Share these steps for putting the finishing touches on a homemade book.

1. THINK OF A TITLE. Design a cover featuring the title and the author’s (your youngster’s) name.

2. INCLUDE A DEDICATION PAGE. Authors often dedicate their books to important people in their lives and sometimes tell why they’re special. (“For my father, who is the best dad in the world.”)



3. ADD AN “ABOUT THE AUTHOR” PAGE.

Your child can write a short biography of himself, perhaps saying where he lives, his favorite school subject, and what he likes to do for fun.

4. BIND THE BOOK. Help him staple the pages together. Or he could punch holes along the left edges, thread colorful yarn through, and tie. Another option is to cut a piece of duct tape the same length as the book. Carefully press the tape along the left side of all pages to seal.